

How Do You Respond to Conflicts?

- I. *The no-nonsense approach.* I don't give in. I try to be fair and honest with the kids, but they need firm guidance in learning what's acceptable behavior and what isn't.
- II. *The problem-solving approach.* If there's a conflict, there's a problem. Instead of battling the kids, I try to set up a situation in which we can all solve the problem together. This produces creative ideas and stronger relationships.
- III. *The compromising approach.* I listen to the kids and help them listen to each other. Then I help them give a little. We can't all have everything we want. Half a loaf is better than none.
- IV. *The smoothing approach.* I like things to stay calm and peaceful whenever possible. Most of the kids' conflicts are relatively unimportant, so I just direct attention to other things.
- V. *The ignoring approach.* I point out the limits and let the kids work things out for themselves. It's good for them, and they need to learn the consequences of their behavior. There's not a whole lot you can do about conflict situations anyway.

Conflicts Practice Exercise

Describe how you would handle the following behaviors. Then state which of the five approaches you believe your method utilizes.

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1. Michael (age 5) picks his nose and other kindergarteners are telling you about it today.
 2. James (age 9) repeatedly shoves in line and has just pushed down a much smaller child causing him to skin his knee.
 3. Martha (age 12) doesn't do her share of the groups project and now her group is not ready to present their results to the class they report.
 4. A group of 4 girls (age 10) verbally fight daily causing at least one to be angry or tearful nearly every day. Today Angie comes to you in tears after being excluded.
 5. Your soccer players fight at recess over whether the ball is actually "out" or not. Alfred has hit Kurt with his fists.
 6. James (age 14) has a history of calling individuals with disabilities demeaning names. Today he called a new student with learning disabilities a "re-tard". The student's friend tells you about it.
 7. Raymond (age 10) threw food in the cafeteria starting a food fight.